

# **EXHIBIT 5**

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION,  
et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

ALBERTO R. GONZALES, in his official  
capacity as Attorney General of the United  
States,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.  
98-CV-5591

**PATRICIA NELL WARREN'S RESPONSES AND OBJECTIONS TO DEFENDANT'S  
FIRST SET OF INTERROGATORIES**

Pursuant to Rules 26 and 33 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Patricia Nell Warren ("ACLU Member") responds and objects to Defendant Alberto R. Gonzales's First Set of Interrogatories ("Interrogatories") as follows:

**GENERAL OBJECTIONS**

1. ACLU Member objects to the Interrogatories to the extent the instructions and demands therein purport to impose obligations in addition to, beyond, or different from those set forth in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Rules of Civil Procedure of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
2. ACLU Member objects to the Interrogatories to the extent they call for the identification or disclosure of information that is neither relevant to the claims and defenses of any party in this action nor reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence. ACLU Member submits these responses and objections without conceding the relevance or materiality of the subject matter of any interrogatory.

RESPONSE TO INTERROGATORY NO. 12

ACLU Member objects to this Interrogatory because it calls for identification of information not within the possession, custody or control of the ACLU Member. ACLU Member further objects to the extent this Interrogatory calls for the identification of information that is neither relevant to the claims and defenses of any party in this action nor reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence. Subject to the foregoing and to the General Objections, ACLU Member responds as follows: ACLU Member has provided a credit card to websites in connection with the purchase of items for sale. ACLU Member has no information responsive to this request for other ACLU members.

INTERROGATORY NO. 13

For each website plaintiff, identify a representative sample of webpages on your website which contains material about which you fear prosecution under COPA, as referenced in Paragraph 2 in the section titled "The Impact of COPA on ACLU Members" on page 24 of the Amended Complaint that "[P]laintiffs fear prosecution under COPA for communicating, sending, displaying, or distributing material that might be deemed 'harmful to minors' by some community in the United States."

RESPONSE TO INTERROGATORY NO. 13

ACLU Member objects that this Interrogatory is unreasonably cumulative and duplicative of Document Request No. 1, and calls for identification of information that is in the public domain. ACLU Member also objects that the phrases used to define "representative sample," including "distribution of characteristics," "degree of explicitness of sexual content," and "population or universe" are vague and ambiguous. ACLU Member further objects that this Interrogatory calls for legal conclusions and is premature. Subject to the foregoing and to the

General Objections, ACLU Member refers Defendant to the web content identified in the Amended Complaint and responds as follows: The Wildcat International website contains several examples of material that might be deemed "harmful to minors" by some community in the United States. Examples include:

1) "Looking for Mr. Goodbar . . . Gay Style," located at [http://wildcatintl.com/partners/pnw/editorials/archive/ed\\_27.html](http://wildcatintl.com/partners/pnw/editorials/archive/ed_27.html);

2) Excerpts from *Billy's Boy*, located at <http://www.wildcatintl.com/press/billysboy/chapter1.html>;

3) Excerpts from *One is the Sun*, located at <http://www.wildcatintl.com/press/oneisthesun/chapter1.html>;

4) Excerpts from *The Wild Man*, located at <http://www.wildcatintl.com/press/wildman/chapter1.html>;

5) Excerpts from *Harlan's Race*, located at <http://www.wildcatintl.com/press/harlansrace/chapter1.html>;

6) Excerpts from *The Beauty Queen*, located at <http://www.wildcatintl.com/press/beautyqueen/chapter1.html>.

INTERROGATORY NO. 14

For each website plaintiff, identify a representative sample of webpages on your website which you believe contains material that has serious literary, artistic, political, scientific and/or social value for adults.

RESPONSE TO INTERROGATORY NO. 14

ACLU Member objects to the extent this Interrogatory calls for the identification of information that is neither relevant to the claims and defenses of any party in this action nor

W I L D C A T



INTERNATIONAL PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES | PARTNERS | CONTACT US | HOME

## PATRICIA NELL WARREN - LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR...GAY STYLE A commentary on Matthew Shephard's death



### NEWS YOU DIDN'T SEE ON TV

As collective grief and outrage fill the gay media after the Wyoming murder, I am hoping for some collective honesty about a deadly social habit of ours that contributed to Shephard's murder. It is one that makes our community vulnerable to hate crime. I'm referring to our habit of trusting strangers too much. Getting into cars with strangers, or letting strangers into our own cars, or our homes, in the course of our hot pursuit of sex or desperate yearning for a mate.

During the sexual revolution of the 1970s, newly liberated straight women had their wake-up call -- they discovered the risks of taking the wrong guy home from a singles bar. A bestselling book of the time, "Looking for Mr. Goodbar," spotlighted the horrors of being murdered by a first date -- it really hammered the lesson home. Who knows how many women's lives that book saved?

Today we badly need a Goodbar wake-up on the gay social scene. After many decades of American-style gaybashing, "stranger danger" is a caution that we should be teaching as a routine matter -- especially to our young people. But we seldom do. It appears that nobody got the message to a gentle idealistic college student named Matthew Shephard. So (according to reports) he trustingly, innocently got into a vehicle with two strangers he met at a gay bar, and he rode off with them. After all, they said they were gay. All gay people are good people, right?

Whatever Matthew was looking for -- sex, or simply an evening of fun with new friends -- he didn't find it, because he got pistol-whipped and left for dead.

If only some gay organization or adult friend could have convinced Matthew, saying, "Hey, man, don't ever go off with strangers. You might run into Mr. Goodbar."

We face threats from three types of strangers -- straight ones, gay ones, and the sneaky ones who say they're gay so we drop our guard and think they're good people. Why do so many of us automatically jump to the conclusion that anyone who is gay -- or alleges they are gay -- can be trusted?

It's true that many hate crimes -- murders, assaults, robberies, rapes -- are gratuitous. You're walking down the street or across the campus with your girlfriend or

[Biography](#)

[Pictures](#)

[Personal Statement](#)

[Editorials](#)

[Secrets of Writing  
and Publishing](#)

[My Stand on  
Free Speech](#)

boyfriend, minding your own business, and BAM. The violence comes at you out of the blue.

But many crimes happen to gay people because we unwittingly make ourselves vulnerable to attack. We trustingly, willingly -- sometimes even avidly -- invite strangers into our cars, our homes, our bodies. How does this disregard for personal safety happen so easily with us?

Since the '50s and '60s, many of us revolted against straight "morality," against rules taught by our parents. This included our parents' no-nos about strangers, which sounded so repressive to rebels of the Stonewall era. But in the heat of ongoing revolt, some of us go overboard and open our lives to a stranger who has violent intentions. We have a deeper need to trust this stranger than straight people do -- all our lives, we were taught to mistrust ourselves, to mistrust our intuitions about others. We tend to be more lonely, desperate and over-anxious for sex and/or companionship.

In addition, getting into a car with strangers, or inviting strangers into your own car, is an American folkway...and a gay folkway as well. The cute hustler, the handsome boy looking for a daddy, steps into the shiny BMW and rides away to his destiny.

To override all the barriers built by a homophobic culture, our media have romanticized hot encounters with strangers. This is especially true with media targeting men -- books, films, magazines, videos, pornography, personal ads, the Internet. Even with so much disease around, the media still push the idea that hot sex with strangers is innocent and fun and adventurous and risk-free (provided you wear a condom, of course). And often it is (if you wear that condom). But sometimes it's not (even if you do wear a condom).

When a man's hormones are pumping and he's hot for the hunt, he can get so reckless that he forgets not only health dangers, but social dangers as well. He can ignore his intuition -- that subtle inner chill that warns even the animals of danger ahead. A horse won't put his hoofs on an unsafe bridge. But a gay man can meet Jeffrey Dahmer at a bar, and recklessly go right home with him.

Sometimes the violent stranger is a sex worker. The older gay man who can't get sex any other way will risk paying a hustler -- and wind up paying with his life, or his health and wealth and peace of mind. He is left dead, or battered and crippled, and robbed. Was the risk worth it? Only he can tell us. And not every male sex worker is gay. Some are straight. Some harbor a homophobic contempt for their gay johns, that may flash out in a violent criminal act. Indeed, some hustlers choose sex work because it gives instant access to trust -- to a john's car, credit cards, home, valuables, bank account information. You don't have to pick locks or break windows, or even use a gun.

Some gay men can leap into car-rides, S & M and other risky scenarios for hundreds and thousands of times, without harm. They even get off on the risk. But they are riding their luck. Gamblers who push their luck with the dice can wind up losing everything -- and so can the gay man who pushes his social luck. Men who



cruise public parks argue that they have a right to do this -- especially the closeted ones who feel they can't have a sex life any other way. But they are asking for their right to meet the Angel of Death -- a straight gay-basher looking for a victim, or a closet case looking for a sex partner to vent his self-hatred on. Those who do meet that dark angel in the bushes might -- in their last moments of consciousness -- wish they had been more careful.

Misplaced trust also makes gay men more vulnerable to undercover police stings.

In my work with young people, I often hear horror stories about teen trust of strangers. Newly out and naive, our young people often learn the hard way that going into a stranger's car or home puts them at risk of date rape. One 18-year-old Asian student hesitantly told me how he met a good-looking 20-something jock on Santa Monica Boulevard one evening, and merrily rode off in the guy's Land Rover. Next thing the student knew, they were stopped in a dark parking lot and the good-looking jock was raping him. When it was over, the jock dumped him in an alley behind a club.

Our teens learn to risk date-rape from our over-romanticized media, and from watching their romance-ridden elders in real-life action. Adults have major flings with strangers, so it must be okay, right? Adults who don't value their own lives set a horrible bad example for young people! The same risk can face gay teens who make sex dates with strangers over the Internet. Ditto the teens who use the Net to set up living arrangements with adult strangers -- they are desperate to leave home and be independent, and don't want to live on the street. Street-wise kids learn to date in packs, or set up housekeeping in groups, with people they know and can truly trust -- finding safety in numbers.

Often I ask myself what percentage of LGBT youth get raped every year simply because they trusted some smooth-talking stranger.

Statistics are hard to get -- few gay boys or lesbian girls or transgendered teens will talk about being raped. As with rapes of straight women, few rapes of our teens get reported to police. A victim of date-rape drugs like "roofies" may not even remember what happened.

We do a great deal to educate our youth about safer sex -- but we do little to teach them that danger isn't always a disease. I wish that every free condom and every pamphlet saying DON'T HAVE UNSAFE SEX were accompanied by warnings like: DON'T GO OFF ALONE WITH 2 OR MORE STRANGERS...or DON'T LET STRANGERS NEAR YOUR DRINK.

Nor are men the only victims. We women have our own problems with misplaced trust. It's true that lesbians and bisexual women experience fewer violent crimes involving trust of strangers. With us, it's more a question of how trusting we are on the second date -- or when we move in together so fast! A few years ago, I met an attractive charismatic woman in her 30s. She was definitely my type -- butch, outdoorsy. But some things -- her possessiveness, drinking, personality change while drunk -- raised a red flag on the first date. Having

survived a heterosexual marriage with a violent possessive man, I sensed danger. It turned out that this woman had a history of arrests and jail time for beating girlfriends. So I showed her the door -- out of my life.

Perhaps I will be criticized for talking about this issue. Maybe I'll be told that I'm anti-sex -- that I'm trying to put a chill on true love, on the rich and full sex life that we all deserve. Hey, I'm not anti-sex or anti-love at all. What I am is anti-murder, anti-assault, anti-robbery, anti-rape. I am 100 percent in favor of surviving a social encounter, to love and have sex another day. If this means waiting a few weeks till you know someone better, or doing a background check if something doesn't seem right, I say do it.

We need to use our gaydar better, to identify threats to personal safety, instead of just squandering this wonderful power on locating new sources of hot fun sex. "Gaydar" is just a fancy word for intuition as used by homosexuals. Intuition is what keeps every animal ahead of the fangs and claws of killer animals. If animals can survive successfully using their intuition, then humans can too.

If your brand-new acquaintance at the party makes the tiniest ominous blip on your gaydar screen, he or she may not be someone you want to know better! There is no hot fun sex in a coma, or the morgue. Why is it that so many in the community won't acknowledge the dangers of out-of-control trust? Why this reluctance to publicize the dark and vulnerable side of our social life? Is it partly because so much money is riding on that romantic myth of hot sex with strangers? Massive financial investments into the gay video industry? Publications that depend on personal ads for extra cash? Sex clubs and circuit parties? All these -- and others -- ride the lure of strangers.

Matthew Shephard's death has struck a national nerve, both in our community and in the mainstream. Maybe his killers will face the death penalty. Maybe a whole raft of federal, state and local hate-crime laws will now be passed. But all the penalties and laws in the world will not protect us if we don't protect ourselves. The murder of this Wyoming student is the wake-up call -- the "Looking for Mr. Goodbar" of our time. Matthew Shephard's story will save some lives.

---

[Back to Editorials](#)

© 2001 by Patricia Nell Warren.  
All rights reserved.

E-mail Patricia at [patriciawarren@aol.com](mailto:patriciawarren@aol.com)  
8306 Wilshire Blvd. Box 8306  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
(323) 966-2466 (323) 966-2467 [fax]

**PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES  
PARTNERS | CONTACT US**

© Copyright 2001-2003 Wildcat International

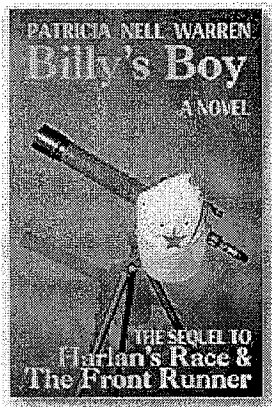




## W I L D C A T



INTERNATIONAL | PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES | PARTNERS | CONTACT US | HOME

BILLY'S BOY -  
Excerpt[Reviews](#)[History](#)[Author's Notes](#)

ORDER AUTOGRAPHED COPY ONLINE

## Chapter One

Micky's was this little video dance club on the West Hollywood strip.

Every Wednesday they had baby night -- \$2 cover, no liquor, nobody over 18, house music, closing at 9, which gave you an hour to get home before curfew.

Teak told me about his adventures at Micky's. He never met anybody there, but he always went back because it was home. He'd tell his parents he and Elena were going to the movies.

Elena would tell her parents the same lie. Then he and Elena would leave home in normal clothes, with voguery party rags in their backpacks. They'd ride the bus from Highland Park into West L.A. When they got off the bus, they'd find a dumpster or a hedge to hide behind, and jump in their vogues. Then they'd go to Micky's. Elena would hang with girls, and Teak would try to hang with boys. They took turns watching each other's backpacks. Elena found cool girls to dance with. Teak had to dance alone. Black and Mexican boys didn't like fat boys any more than white boys did. Teak's heart got broken every weekend. But he kept going back. You could catch a big crowd and a lot of high energy at Micky's at quarter to nine. By 10, Elena and Teak would be back in Highland Park. They made sure they could talk about the movie they'd "seen." Their parents bought the lie totally.

Now we told our all-controlling adults that we wanted to go to baby night at Micky's.

"Be home by curfew," the adults said.

Ana, the Queen of Malibu, turned her hair loose and wore her best designer jeans and her silver-hanger earring. Teak jumped into vogue -- sparkly gold tank-top and patent leather dance shoes. His velvet pants, that his aunt Nancy got him, made his butt look a light-year wide. Elena had a red satin shirt that she'd bought at a thrift store, and platform shoes.

She sat in front of Teak and did his face. He kept his makeup in his own secret box. I had never seen a guy wear makeup, so I was in shock. Teak glowed as Elena put the last swipe of mascara on his eyelashes. My homely fat buddy actually looked like a star.

"You are soooo glamorous," Elena told Teak. She kissed him on the cheek, then stuck her diamond bead in the side of her nose.

"I am the soul of (snap, snap, snap, snap) glama!" Teak said. He looked at me.

"I'm not your date, okay?" I said. "You're the fruta who wants to go to the fruta club. And we're your bodyguards, okay?"

"Yeah," said Ana, "we're doing this for you, stupid."

"Don't diss him now." Elena gave us a gangsta glare. I dressed like I felt -- Orange County straight boy going to a WeHo club to look for fading light from his gay tather, and wanting to be invisible. That meant old jeans, Star Wars T-shirt, Nikes, and a new baseball cap that Mom gave me, that said "Clinton in '92." The bill was frontwards so ethnic dudes wouldn't think I was an enemy homeboy. With the bathroom door locked, I gave myself a cadet glare and trimmed my eyelashes super-short.

We had gofered for a Valhalla commercial shoot, so we had \$50 to spend.

Elena had a few secret pills of Ecstasy in her jeans pocket.

"Oh my, we are gonna jam," Teak said as we headed for the Boulevard.

Elena and Teak did Ecstasy before I could stop them. Ana looked at me, like asking for my permission. I shook my head "no" and set my watch for 9:45. I was in charge of this mission, so I had to keep myself together.

In front of Micky's, the sidewalk was crowded with high school and college students. They were smoking cigarettes and throwing attitude and staring at each other. We lit up our smokes, and stared back. It was the same stuff you see at school dances, except that guys were checking out buys' butts instead of girls' butts. My cheeks squeezed together nervously. Did guys stare at my Dad's butt like this? My stomach was shivering. A few guys were looking at me. A few girls stared at Ana and Elena. Nobody was looking at Teak.

As we headed for the door, this ancient leather troll in a Harley jacket leaned out from his sidewalk table, where he had flyers. "Play safely, kids," he said, and plopped condoms into our hands.

We shoved the condoms in our pockets and forgot them, as we pushed past the security guys. They were turning back adult men who wanted to go in and pick up kids.

Inside, feeling jittery, Ana and I stayed behind Teak and Elena, the experts, as they pushed through the shoulders, biceps and elbows of white boys, black boys, Mexican boys, Filipino boys, Japanese boys. "Look at all these handsome honeys," Teak hissed in my ear. All of them were horny, and all of them were looking at me.

He grinned and caught my fingers to pull me along.

"Don't hold my effing hand," I hissed back.

"Oh my god, there's Shayla," said Elena.

Her eyes did a missile lock on a tall black girl in a silver cowboy shirt. She left us. Even with those platform shoes, Elena was so short that we couldn't see her pushing through the crowd. All we could see was the ripple she made.

Teak pushed me and Ana past the bartenders serving pop and juice, toward the crowded smoky dance floor. The whole wall behind the dance floor was video screens with the same image. A thousand Madonnas danced and sang "Vogue." The air shuddered with the machine music that Teak listened to in his room. Everybody was grinding and rump-shaking enough to send the Rev. Dwight into a coma.

I had literally never seen two guys dancing together, not even in the movies or TV. So a whole roomful of teenage studs pumping their packages at each other was sending me into shock. Then I was getting hard, and not needing Ecstasy to feel it. I was fighting my own heat. Guys are pure mindless heat with a brain loosely attached. Women, and other guys, and sheep and dogs, are not safe around us. In Costa Mesa, Orik and I knew a horny kid who was always looking for relief. Finally his parents caught him with his German Shepherd. He had smeared peanut butter on his penis, and the dog was licking it off. His parents threw him out. We never did hear what happened to him. The parents kept the dog.

"C'mon...let's vogue," said Teak, pulling me.

"Bodyguards don't dance. Go find somebody."

Teak's cool was starting to melt down. He blurted, "You don't want to dance with me 'cause I'm colored, huh?"

Teak stormed off and worked the crowd, asking this guy and that guy. He hung out at the bar for a while. Everybody ignored him. We watched his face get sadder and sadder. Elena was ignoring us, dancing with Shayla. Ana was outraged on Teak's behalf. She hissed in my ear, "You're being mean, and I won't speak to you if you're mean."

"Excuse-me you."

"Then the three of us can dance," Ana said. Always the diplomat.

My piss-off flamed out and I felt bad. So I pulled myself together and went to where Teak was leaning, with his empty pop can.

"Look," I said, "don't do the racist stuff with me. If I was racist, I wouldn't let you come in my room."

"Sorry," he said. A tear streaked down his cheek.

"And I don't know why these lame jerks aren't all over you. You look so rad tonight."

"Really!" Teak said sarcastically. "I was starting to think you don't appreciate (snap snap) a big queena like me."

He rubbed away the tear.

"Anyway, buddies are better than a date," I said. "A date might ditch you."

"Like Shayla just ditched Elena," said Ana, watching the black girl leaving alone.

Teak's eyes searched mine. Jesus, he did have nice eyes -- so black they were purple. And his nice short eyelashes were to be envied, even with mascara on them. "Buddies?" he said.

"Brothers?"

"Yeah." I put out my hand. We shook.

"You'll have to show me how to dance," I said.

"Just do what I do."

"Not where every big queena in the world can watch, though."

Elena came back with a disgusted shrug. So the four of us found a dark corner on the dance floor, with a speaker right in our ears. There Ana faced Elena, and I faced Teak, and Teak started going through the vogue moves like Madonna and her male dancers were doing. I guessed he had been practicing for months, alone in his room with his radio. Elena's dancing was stiff, like a robot, but Teak was fluid.

"Catch the beat. Christ, it's so easy," he said.

I tried.

Teak got frustrated with me. "Stop (snap) that!" Then he went macho again. "Here...let's shadow dance, so you can feel it." He spun me around, pressed behind me, and glommed his big arms around me. "Just relax. God, you're like a broom, or something." So I leaned back on him stiffly, and Ana leaned on me, and Elena leaned on Ana, and we sandwiched into the beat as a foursome. Teak stood there in place, pumping his body under mine with that voguing beat. I relaxed and the thump of the music filled me. I held his arms in place around his waist, and Ana held my arms around her. I let his hot sweaty cheek press against my cheek, and pressed my hot sweaty nose against the back of Ana's slippery neck, under her hair, which was getting hotter and wetter by the minute. Her silver-hanger earring almost put my eye out. The floor was packed now -- the four of us lost in a mass of sweaty bodies. The whole crowd amped off into the flashing light show and the space-hammer beat.

Did my Dad move like this?

When we got thirsty, we fought our way back to the bar for Cokes, then found space where we could look cool and watch everybody.

Right next to me, a Filipino boy and a white boy were deep-kissing, eyes closed, with their tongues down each other's throats. I stared at them, remembering being at the lake with

Shawn. I leaned against the wall. I could feel their body heat and hear their lips sliding. Their elbows brushed me. They were tasting each other's faces with their lips, and the Filipino boy was holding the other's face in his hand. "Oh baby," he whispered. Then they sank into another kiss, tongues driving deep. I actually watched their tongues sliding. A guy calling a guy baby...

I stared back at the dance floor. So that was what my Dad looked like when he kissed Harlan. He'd probably kissed other guys too. My hard-on was going crazy. Was this how my Dad felt? His feelings were right inside me, bursting into light and shockwaves like a supernova going off with incredible violence and beauty, and this time I wasn't staring at it through some telesopc, I was in the middle of it. This was what I'd wanted to do with Shawn...and now I'd never have the chance. Suddenly my watch beeped. Jesus, it was late. "Fifteen minutes to curfew," I said. "Home...on the double."

Billy's Boy © 1997 by Patricia Nell Warren.  
All rights reserved.

---

[Back to Wildcat Press](#)

E-mail Wildcat at [wildcatpress@aol.com](mailto:wildcatpress@aol.com)  
8306 Wilshire Blvd. Box 8306  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
(323) 966-2466 (323) 966-2467 [fax]

**PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES**  
**PARTNERS | CONTACT US**

© Copyright 2001-2003 Wildcat International



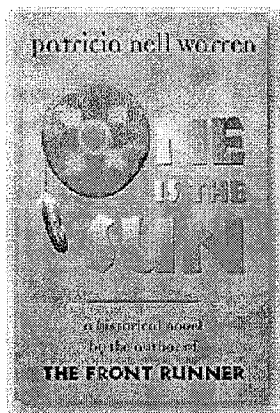
W I L D C A T



• I N T E R N A T I O N A L • PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES | PARTNERS | CONTACT US | HOME

## ONE IS THE SUN - Excerpt

---



[Reviews](#)

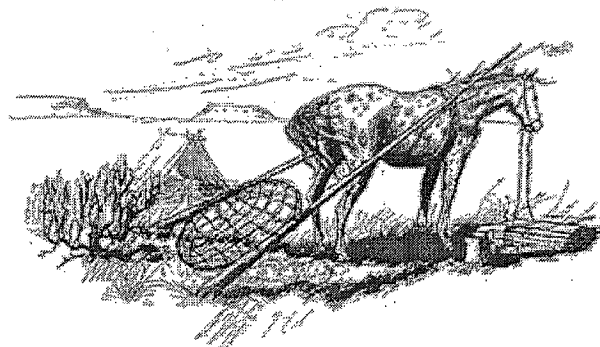
[History](#)

[Author's Notes](#)



ORDER AUTOGRAPHED COPY ONLINE

### Chapter One



Spring 1857



The young slave-girl shivered with fear as she waded in a sheltered cove of the Feathered Snake River.<sup>1</sup>

Oh! How the River shouted in the girl's ears!-roaring, rumbling, hissing, rushing to Her destiny in a distant Big Water that the girl had never seen, only heard described at an evening campfire by a grandmother who had journeyed there.

The girl folded her thin arms over her tiny breasts, vibrating with that wondrous and terrifying sound of Life, and her desperate thirteen year-old wish for a more beautiful life than tanning buffalo robes for her owners. Her naked body vibrated, just as the delicate new leaves of the willow reeds were doing all around her, in the cold spring breeze.

It seemed to the slave-girl that the trees were fluttering with her own terror.

Something -tickled her right ankle, and she saw the silvery lightning-flash of a fish in the clouded water.

The Sun had just sprung into sight and bent Her great bow of Life. Showers of arrows of new light came flying through the branches of the tall cottonwood trees along the River. They struck, flashing, into the swirling, silty waters. The light ricocheted from two shapes gliding among the cottonwoods-two deer.

How could the deer be so free, and she a slave?

The Feathered Snake had flooded Her wide meadows-had inundated the gravel islands that were usually bared in summer when the River fell. Along the islands, trembling groves of cottonwoods stood braced in the foaming rush.

just then, with a cracking groan, one of those trees toppled slowly downstream and was swept away. At the noise, the two deer fled.

The death of the cottonwood horrified the girl. So she looked, instead, at the leafy Beings still standing firm in the flood, holding their sunlit heads high.

Are the trees afraid because they can't run? she cried out silently within herself.

In the year that she had been a slave, she had waked and dreamed with her fear, defeated it sometimes, been crushed by it often-ever since that day last spring when Utes had attacked her Bannack camp, slaughtered her family. The bodies lay scattered everywhere, amid the smoldering-No! She would not remember that. Her captors had captured all the children, and traded her to the half-Ute slave traders for two quilled belts.

Surely she was worth more than two belts!

Behind her, on the bank, were her poor possessions. A stained old deerskin was folded neatly, ready to dry her. Beside it were her worn-out moccasins and a little necklace she'd made. She had left her dress and her worn old buffalo robe back at the traders' lodge. She did not even own a knife.

Yesterday, after many days' travel from their winter camp at a fort, the traders had camped here for the spring trading rendezvous. A powerful band of Shoshonis waited eagerly to

barter for the many fine goods.

Today, she was going to be traded again.

The trader's wife had ordered her to bathe, and was going to dress her up for the trading. Who would her new owners be? Kind people who might free her in four years? Or cruel people who would beat her? She, had always heard it said that no one should be a Dog, a slave, longer than five years. And yet she had seen slaves who were always trade away before their five years were up-who spent their whole lives as Dogs.

"Ho, Big River!" she whispered in Bannack, the language of her dead family. "Please help me!"

But as she scooped the cold water over her body, she shivered more than ever. Her reflection was tearing itself apart into a thousand ragged terrors.

Suddenly it angered her to see her reflection doing that. In her breast, a bright little sun of energy bent its bow and fired an arrow.

"I need courage, you fart-tail!" she shouted at her reflection, and kicked at it.

Suddenly, as the splash flew, she thought of a way to help herself command the terror. A basket, she thought. I will make a basket while the trading is going on,

Feeling better, she waded over to the willows and broke off some limber canes. How fine it would be to have a knife!

For the first time that day, a tiny sparkle of hope winked through the panic in her mind. But why should she feel hope?

"Tadpole!" The trader's Ute wife, Elk Calf, was shouting at her from beyond the willows in a deep, rasping voice like a bear's. "Where are you?"

"I am here!" the girl shouted back in Ute, that new language that she hated so much. Panicking, she ducked all the way under the water, wetting her hair.

"Hurry up, Tadpole!" Elk Calf was roaring over there. "Today you'd better not run away!"

Splashing to the bank, the girl grabbed her necklace-a thrown-away thong she'd found, strung with a few iridescent bits of shell, tiny sparkling crystals, gleaming fish scales-all gathered along the rivers in moments like this, when she was seeking courage. As she hung it back around her neck, she whispered a quick prayer:

"Ahey, Great River! I ask to be traded to a kind person!

Then she wrapped her body hastily with the deerskin, pulled on her moccasins, and hurried back along the deer trail.

"Ahah! There you are, worthless frog!" Elk Calf shouted.

Elk Calf was fat-so fat that her fringed hide dress, with its thousand elk teeth sewn on it in rows, looked as wide as a tepee. All her finery-her clattering turquoise necklace worth thirty horses, her clinking hair discs of abalone worth fifty horses-could

not hide the fatness of bloating herself, like a black bear who had dug into a food cache, with the strange foods that the rich métis traders brought-foods of the terrifying white-skinned Skunk people, like sugar and flour.

The fat woman seized a handful of the girl's dripping hair and jerked her back toward the camp.

"Uuuuuuuyy!" the girl cried out, grimacing with pain. She stumbled along, trying to clutch the deerskin around her naked body and hold on to the willow reeds, all at the same time.

The wondrous roar of the Feathered Snake faded.

Harsh barks of dogs, shrill whinnies of horses fighting the lariats around their necks, rich children shouting mean things at one another-these sounds now tormented her ears. Through the dripping hair that had fallen over her forehead, she could glimpse the rich Shoshoni tepees everywhere-more than a hundred. Breathing their many smokes into the river mists, the tepees looked like a herd of monsters grazing along the river.

Would one of those monsters swallow her?

Inside the traders' big tepee, all was in disorder-sleeping places rumped, trade goods piled half-readied around the gray ashes of the dying lodge fire. By the flap door was one tiny circle of order, where- three loaded thunder-irons, and pouches of powder and shot, were stacked. These traders were always ready to war with anyone who would steal their goods.

Elk Calf jerked the deerskin away from the girl's naked body.

"Where was Tadpole?" boomed Calf's husband from outside the lodge. He was Walking Wolf, the old half-Ute trader.

"By the river," Calf shouted back, her round face glowing.  
"Always by the river! She is truly growing into a frog!

"Where is my dress?" quavered the girl.

"I am going to tear it up for polishing rags," Calf sneered. "Today you will wear this."

Out of a rawhide packing case, the fat woman jerked a wrinkled trading dress of her own that she was now too fat to wear. Its long fringes were tipped with tiny cones of metal that tinkled together with a silvery rustling sound. Calf also unpacked a pair of crushed beaded moccasins, and a handful of crumpled red ribbons, and flung them at the girl.

Hatefully the girl let the clothes fall to the ground. That dress was beautiful, yes-worth maybe two horses. But, in the past year, Tadpole had seen six other young maidens shoved into it to be traded.

"Pick them up!" shouted-Calf, and slapped her on the cheek.

Outside the lodge, Walking Wolf roared: "Don't bruise her face, you fool! Today is trading day!"

Cheek stinging, the girl sadly pulled the trading dress over her head. But the dress was too long for her, and the cones, instead of tinkling magically around her ankles, dragged silently on the ground. Her damp skin shrank from that leather stained by the

tears of other slave-maidens.

Now Calf gripped a porcupine-quill hairbrush in her fat hand and roughly brushed the girl's wet hair.

"Eeeech!" Tadpole yiped, as the brush caught in a snarl.

Calf's strong fingers were twisting those terrible ribbons into her hair, one after another. Not for beauty did Calf put those ribbons there, no, no! Not with caring for the spirit of a maiden! The ribbons were there to bring a better trade.

Shortly the girl was shoved out of the, lodge again. She stumbled over the fringes and almost fell.

The Sun was above the cottonwood trees now, but the breeze was still cold. In front of Walking Wolf's lodge, the cooking fire was blazing a deep oily red as the trader's oldest son fed it with dry pine snags. The traders' fires always looked dirty, somehow. A blackened metal pot of the Skunk brew called Black Water was steaming on the coals.

By the woodpile, one of the trader's kinsmen was wrapping two more loaded thunder-irons in old deer hides and burying them in the earth.

The girl shivered at the feel of loaded guns hidden everywhere in the traders' camp. In the blink of time, Walking Wolf's family could grab the guns and turn that camp into a thunderstorm of death. Even fat old Calf was an excellent shot!

Near the fire, the old trader threw open his blue blanket to warm his hands. He was sitting in his grand seat, which was carved from a cottonwood stump and covered with an expensive spotted catskin from the south. The seat was his way of saying he was the chief here-a trading chief. He always pretended not to recognize any peace chief, war chief, clan chief or Medicine chief who came to trade. In this way, no one could say that he favored anyone.

Even when Walking Wolf was sitting straight and still, as he was doing now, he tapped his foot on the ground like he was heading down some new trail, and his long wolf nose was always lifted into the wind to smell out new wealth.

He was handsome for an old man, the girl thought to herself-restless and quick as a youth, burnished like old metal by danger and travel and experience. Tiny curls of his frizzy gray hair escaped from his braids, for he was one of those mixed-bloods known as Buffalo Heads. The girl had heard Walking Wolf say that his black-skinned father had been a slave that these black ones were all slaves of the Skunk people.

She wondered if Walking Wolf's nose could smell the fresh scent of the cottonwood trees-or if it could only smell iron. Walking Wolf loved iron in any form-knives, kettles, guns, any of the strange Skunk tools. He had said once that the Skunk men tied up his father, and all their slaves, with lariats made of pieces of iron. Why did he love iron so much, then?

Not visible were the old trader's two boot knives, and the throwing knife in the back of his collar-and the small loaded "belly guns" that he wore inside his coat, in a special harness under his armpits. How many hundreds of horses had Walking Wolf traded for all his finery and his incredible metal weapons? the girl wondered. A whole herd?

Walking Wolf turned. In the shadow of his wide black hatbrim, his restless eyes shifted sideways at the girl and studied her. Uncomfortable, Tadpole frowned and looked over his shoulder at the river.

During the past year, she had sensed that this old trader was interested in her. No, he had never slept with her. He had even kept his kinsmen away from her, so that she stayed free of disease. This way, he would get a better trade. Yet the feeling was there.

One day she had asked him a question about trading. Walking Wolf had laughed, and told her, "Your questions are like spring bees around my head! You would make a good trader's wife." Yet now he was going to trade her. Why?

Had she done something wrong? Or did he like Calf better?

And did she want to open her tender flower to the penis of this man who reeked of iron and slaves?

As he studied her, the girl held her breath. Would he now order that she not be traded? She would rather stay with the traders than go to strangers! Again, the hope winked in her breast.

Walking Wolf spoke curtly to Calf, and the girl could see the rifle poised in his thinking-gleaming, lethal.

"I have told you many times-that dress is too long. Have her sit down and not move, so she doesn't look foolish. And get the rest of our goods out. The people will be coming soon!"

The girl's stomach sank.

With a heavy sigh of resignation, she trudged over to the Trading Tree and sat down, leaning against its rough gray trunk.

Ten of Walking Wolf's male relatives came running with goods. Puppy Snot was Walking Wolf's youngest son-a clumsy boy of fourteen summers, who now fumbled and dropped several fine blankets in the dust. Young Wolf, the trader's oldest son, scolded Puppy Snot, and dusted the blankets off. Soon armloads of goods were stacked in the shade of the Trading Tree.

The girl tilted her head back and stared up at that great plant Being-an ancient cottonwood that stood right beside the Salt Road. The tree was so tall, with such a myriad of branches, and a trunk so deeply wrinkled and swirled by age, that she looked like a river stood up on end. The girl gazed up into the mysterious sun-shadowed world of the foliage, where songbirds flitted. Why couldn't she be a little child again, and climb up into that secret world to daydream? But that secret world was now ashes, in the fire that had burned her family's camp.

Shifting, the breeze blew the oily smoke of the trader's fire through the clean glimmering shade of the tree. The smoke drifted past the fifty fine horses tied in a long line, ready for trading-curved over the heaped blankets and iron pots, and past the rolls of cloth and stacks of metal traps.

The tree felt like a friend, somehow. Tadpole wondered if the tree had actually decided to grow there so that frightened slaves could feel her strength and her calm.

The girl looked sadly to the north, and then to the south. In both directions, the faint trace of the Salt Road could be seen winding away over the hills. The girl had heard Walking Wolf talking to his sons about it about the thousands of years that the Utes had traded salt up and down that road, from the Great Salt Lake.

As the girl watched Calf scurrying around the tree, she felt enormous contempt for, the woman. Yes, yes! The fat woman's great family name did not keep her from rushing to obey this half-breed trader like a common dog! And Walking Wolf's relatives-slaves also! Even his sons!

Did she want to have such a life? the girl wondered.

She felt the tears come rushing toward her eyes. They threatened to tear loose all the little tree groves of courage that she had planted in her mind and sweep them downstream in a flood of despair.

"Calf!" The trader's voice of authority sounded like the roar of a thunder-iron.

"Yes, yes!" His wife put down a pile of tanned buffalo robes and hurried over to see what he wanted.

"The girl is shivering," he snarled, his lips curling back from his long white teeth. "Give her some Black Water and sugar. Sad shivering slaves do not trade well."

Calf's thick lips tightened. Surely the fat woman knew that her husband was interested in this frog-maiden.

Calf seized the steaming coffeepot from the fire, dashed some Black Water into a metal cup and dumped some sugar in it. As she shoved the cup at the girl, she carelessly dashed hot coffee over the girl's wrist.

Licking off her wrist, the girl tremblingly held the hot cup with deep appreciation. She bathed her nose in the delicate steam, breathing the good smell. Carefully she stirred the sugar into the coffee, cocking her head to listen to the metal spoon clink musically in the metal cup.

She remembered all her questions to Walking Wolf about the Skunk things that now surrounded her-things that were still magical and a little frightening to her. This powerful black tea, for instance-such an amazement and a luxury to the peoples in these northern mountains. "Do the Black Water berries," she had asked him in her new limping Ute, "grow beside the Missouri?" The Missouri River, the great river of the Medicine Wheel, was a river she had only heard of.

But he had explained that, no, these brown berries came from the far south-so far that a person could hardly walk there in one lifetime.

How smart Walking Wolf was! Among the tribes and the métis and the white-skins, he was respected for his powerful learning, because he was a man who liked to sit beside the evening fire with the learned people. The girl had seen him do this. He knew how to listen, and how, to ask questions about peoples, wars, wealth, tools.

Watching him at the fires, the girl had felt a deep and hungry desire to learn also. There were so many questions about Life!



They teemed about her head like spring flies above a pond! But whenever she, the tadpole-maiden, had wiggled forward with one of her questions, men chiefs had told her sharply, "These things are not for women!"

Why was this? she wondered.

Now, with the Black Water in her stomach, a wonderful new strength was flowing through her limbs.

The Sun now arced above the cottonwoods.

Soon the Shoshonis would be coming. She must do something to save herself! Should she walk over to Walking Wolf and boldly tell him that she wanted to be his wife? But her spirit cried out that it would mean indignity and death to offer herself like that. No, no! She would not do this to herself!

So she forced her trembling hands to begin the basket. Grimly she took two willows and twisted them together to make the X on which she would weave the round wheel of the basket's bottom.

Walking Wolf pondered his display of goods, clearly not satisfied with it. He got out his tobacco pouch and rolled himself one of those strange little tubes that he smoked, wrapped in a piece of cornhusk.

Finally he issued a curt order.

Swiftly, the oldest boy pulled a fine young dun gelding out of the line of horses. He curried the horse's hide with a handful of dry grass, then threw the finest Navajo saddle onto his back. Puppy Snot ran to get a, painted Cheyenne shield and hang it on the dun's saddle horn. While one of the trader's kinsmen, Jacques, tied twenty two-hand pouches of salt on the dun's saddle, Calf got out a black eagle pinion feather, its quill beaded, and tied it in the dun's mane. With each added item, the dun horse became more desirable-an unfolding symbol of the great wealth that Walking Wolf could offer these people.

Finally, another kinsman, Garcia, hung a magnificent muzzle-loading thunder-iron from the saddle, in its fringed and beaded sheath.

Walking Wolf frowned. "Calf!" he thundered.

"Yes, yes!" she called from inside their lodge.

"You forgot to polish the thunder-iron!" he roared.

Calf came running out of the lodge, carrying the girl's old dress. Tearing a piece out of the hem, she polished the gun with a bit of buffalo tallow till the barrel sparkled and the fine wood of the stock glowed warmly in the sun.

"Huh! Good!" exclaimed Walking Wolf. "Excellent! Excellent!"

His kinsmen's tense faces all brightened into smiles of relief, and they scattered to their duties of guarding the camp. Looking tired, Calf poured herself a metal cup of coffee, and mopped her sweaty brow on her fine-fringed sleeve.

The old trader leaped up from his grand seat and began to pace around the fire.

Fearfully the girl craned her neck. Oh no! Dust rose from the first distant riders, coming from the Shoshoni camp.

"A-hey! It will be a good trading time," Walking Wolf boomed at his family, still pacing fitfully. "These are times of war and change. The Skunk dogs dig for gold bones everywhere. The Skunks at the Great Salt Lake fight with us Utes for the good salt. Times of danger. Yes, yes!"

The old man grinned a wolf-grin, showing every tooth. "But they are good times for us trading métiſ! They will make us richer! More powerful yet! We will search, search for the perfect prize!"

"A-hey!" echoed Young Wolf. "I have been in the Shoshoni camp and seen the many goods they have ready to trade!"

Walking Wolf rested his eyes approvingly on the boy. This favorite son was already a big help in the trading.

Suddenly Walking Wolf seemed to remember something-he whirled, and stared up the Salt Road.

"Garcia," he growled. "You will watch for Earth Thunder. You will sign to me if she comes."

I Earth Thunder was the only thing that could spoil Walking Wolf's trading on this perfect Spring Moon day, with this perfect pile of prizes.

The girl had never seen Earth Thunder, but in the past year, she had heard much-very much!-about this old woman. Every year, Earth Thunder came to this rendezvous, from the place where her Medicine lodge stood-in the mysterious country of the hot springs that the people called the Fire Hole. And every year, the girl had heard, Earth Thunder spoiled the old man's trading. It was said that she was the only person who could outsmart Walking Wolf.

Suddenly the girl smiled to herself. How did Earth Thunder get to be so smart, if learning was forbidden to women?

The girl hoped that Earth Thunder would come.

Now the first Shoshonis flocked under the Trading Tree. Their eyes glowing with excitement and greed, they clustered around the dun horse with his load of luxuries. While a woman picked up a front hoof to inspect it, a scarred old warrior drew the thunder-iron out of its sheath, licking the barrel expertly.

Farther along, coveys of Shoshoni women, chattering softly in their language, were inspecting the incredible array of blankets. The little brass cones tinkled confidently in the fringed hems of their trading dresses. They were wearing their best eagle plumes and their wide belts whose symbols told of their clan lineages. The girl could understand their talk fairly well because Bannack, Ute and Shoshoni are sister tongues.

The girl felt nauseated from the perfumes of the rich women-beaver castor mixed with many herbs.

Behind the women, Shoshoni men came prancing on well-curried horses, or strode on foot, wearing their best-fringed shirts and leggings. Last of all came the slaves, puffing with armfuls of the things that the Shoshonis would trade to Walking Wolf: tanned deerskins, bundles of arrows, parfleches of

pemmican, bows, beaded dresses. Puffing horses hauled travois loaded with tanned buffalo robes.

The girl clenched her hands into fists. Then, with difficulty, she unclenched her fingers to weave the willows.

All winter, she knew, those slaves had worked by the firelight till their backs hurt and their visions blurred. Yes, the help of many slaves was needed to hunt all those animals and dye all those quills and sew on all those thousands of tiny beads. The girl herself had tanned twenty large buffalo robes that left her hands rough and chapped.

A few people glanced at her. What would they offer? Five quilted belts, maybe?

Now an old clan chief tottered into the trading circle. She was horribly skinny, with thin dried-up braids dangling from her skull. Her dress was so weighted with rich beading that the girl wondered how she could stand up. Her name was Two Lake.

Frowning, the girl watched as slaves spread a rich blanket and cushions for the old woman, and lowered her onto them. Then they draped another rich blanket over her bony shoulders and put her eagle-wing fan into her skeleton hand. Then all her relatives crowded around her, including a scarred old warrior with a big Adam's apple, who was evidently her husband.

In their deep eye sockets, Two Lake's eyes flicked around the circle, stopping briefly at the girl. The girl prayed that the horrible skinny chief would not want her!

Just then, Tadpole noticed another old woman.

This woman, tiny, slender and birdlike, had just tied her muscular spotted mare to a broken cottonwood, and was unpacking something from the mare's loaded travois with deft jabbing motions of her hands. A freshly killed rabbit was tied to the horse's harness.

Now and then, the old woman glanced at the trading, head cocked, her slanted black eyes sparkling. Her nose was thin and curved, like a slender beak.

She was so small! Yet somehow she looked as strong as that river down there, with a cleanness of wet breezes about her. Surely she was not much younger than Two Lake-sixty summers, perhaps. Yet her skin had a colorful glow of health like a baby's. Her cheeks were as richly lined with life-experience as the silvery bark of that ancient cottonwood, the Trading Tree.

As the crowd shifted to give this new woman some room, they stared at her and whispered. Walking Wolf had his back to the new arrival. Had he not noticed her? Or was he pretending not to recognize her?

The old woman had taken two colorful blankets out of her travois. She spread one carefully in the shade, then wrapped herself in a beautiful red-and-green one, and proceeded to sit down with the greatest dignity and calm that the girl had ever seen in another human.

Her facial-features were those of a very different people, from far far away. Her clothing was different too-her dress made of a many-colored stuff that the girl knew was from the far south.

And she is rich, the girl thought enviously. For the woman's beautiful blanket was from the southern land that Walking Wolf called Mai-hee-ko. That blanket would cost twenty girls like herself. In her hair, the old woman wore two iridescent green feathers, also from Mai-hee-ko, that were worth five horses apiece, or eight or nine slaves. Her broad woman's belt shimmered with the most wondrous kind of beading and bore strange symbols. The beads alone were worth fifteen horses.

Tadpole snatched the old woman's calmness and held it to her own heart. Who is she? the girl wondered.

Beside her, the woman laid out a richly beaded bag for carrying a Medicine Pipe. She must be a Medicine woman. All her beautiful things created a circle of beauty around her.

Was this Earth Thunder?

The trading began, and the skinny chief motioned a slave-boy forward. She and Walking Wolf had just completed their trade-the boy for eight pouches of salt-when a thing happened that changed the atmosphere of the Trading Circle. Earth Thunder stood up.

She did it very calmly-stood to her full height. She shifted her bright-colored blanket on her shoulders, and gazed over the people's heads at the mountains. Though she was so small, she towered into the sky somehow, like one of those thunderheads in a summer storm.

The crowd of Shoshonis fell silent, and stirred uneasily.

The girl felt her hair standing on end. When a Medicine woman of such a high reputation stood up, it meant great trouble, or a prophecy, or healing-or war.

Through her mind, darting 'frantically like minnows, came all the things that she had ever heard about Medicine women. Many of the men chiefs hated them. Some called them "witches" in the different tongues of the Peoples. They were enormously powerful. They ran healing ceremonies and Sun Dances. They were educated, and taught children. They sat in the governments of the few Peoples who allowed learned women among them. Some Medicine women terrified the People by talking to the spirits of the dead, or making fire jump out of their hands.

Now the girl stared uneasily at Earth Thunder, wondering if this old woman would make fire jump out of her hands.

Walking Wolf turned and stared directly at the Medicine woman for the first time. His face was expressionless, cold and formal-his face of not recognizing any chief. And yet the girl knew that he was deeply, terribly angry. Earth Thunder had snatched away his command of the Trading Tree.

What will he do? the girl wondered. How can anyone possibly defeat Walking Wolf? No one can do that!

Suddenly the girl felt that she had lost all hope. A sob lurched in her breast. She clutched the basket and choked the sob back. She had to be strong! Strong!

But one tiny tear ran swiftly down her cheek to spot the bosom of her trading dress.

For a few moments longer, Earth Thunder remained standing. She appeared to be studying a hawk who was making slow circles high above the sagebrush hills.

Would she speak? the girl wondered. Would she say something about the ugliness of trading human beings?

But Earth Thunder said nothing. She sat down on her beautiful blanket again, and reached for her pipe bag.

All around her, the crowd relaxed, buzzing like a swarm of bees, with curiosity and excitement.

"Ho!" Walking Wolf said, then clapped his hands. "Uh-huh! Yes!" he said loudly and boldly. "She stood, and it didn't rain. Nor did it change the value of this salt!"

He gave the pouches to the skinny chief, and signed to his kinsmen to take the slave-boy away.

Then he started to do a lively dance that the métis called the jig. As his beaded moccasins beat time on the ground, the long eagle feather on his black hat bobbed rhythmically up and down. Flinging his arms high, the old trader snapped his fingers and flashed his feet through some quick steps.

"Heeeeeeeey-hah!" shouted the other métis. The Shoshonis shouted too, greatly entertained, forgetting Earth Thunder.

Amid the uproar, Earth Thunder drew her Medicine Pipe out of the leather bag. The pipe-bowl was carved of a fine black stone, and was shiny from many years of loving touches and prayer. The old woman rubbed it against her face, to brighten it with her skin oils. Caressing her pipe-stem, which was carved from the wood of bow ash, she hung her pipe feathers on it. Then she joined the stem to the bowl, bringing together the female of the bowl with the male of the stem. How beautiful it looked to smoke the sacred Pipe and pray! the girl thought enviously.

As Earth Thunder pressed tobacco into the pipe-bowl, holding the Pipe caressingly in her strong small hands, her eyes met the girl's for a brief moment.

The girl was jolted by the energy of that gaze-a searching, studying, feeling and knowing gaze that she had not experienced from any other human.

Earth Thunder was thinking to herself:

*Questions open the lodge door of the Mind. Answers close the door.*

*Again I ask myself-why am I beginning this great journey into the North? Is it only because I was too comfortable by that little Healing Spring at the Fire Hole River? Is it only because I had become too isolated from other humans-from other women? Is it only because I was ceasing to challenge myself to move ahead, ever ahead, in my learning?*

*How could I ever feel comfortable on the Earth for one blink of time ... I, who grew to maidenhood in the midst of absolute terror, on a pyramid of bones? I who was at the Water Temple when the Iron-Heads finally found it, in -the great forest of the South?*

*I was only nine years old, but I understood what was happening when their Black Robes commanded us to stop loving the Mother Earth.*

*I knew what it meant when we Bow Girls bent our weapons and sang our reply with arrows. When one of my own arrows stuck quivering in the eye of an Iron-Head soldier, and he fell, screaming and clawing at the arrow. I was nine years old.*

*As the great thunder-irons-on-wheels began to roar, our forces buckled into masses of torn flesh. Ten other maidens and myself were quickly hidden by one of the young priestesses.*

*We heard the screaming as the Iron-Heads killed the captured Temple Mothers, one by one. We smelled the burned flesh, as the Iron-Heads strove to char our love of being women, of mirroring the Earth....*

*We young ones, and our single priestess, fled into the great North. We grew up on our journey.*

*Enemies were everywhere, faces lurking in the forest, shadows behind the rocks, waiting at the river fords, galloping toward us on their Spirit Dogs. We learned to move through the land invisibly, that great land that now was ruled by the Iron-Heads.*

*Somewhere in the North, we hoped that we would find caring Peoples-free Peoples. Would there be Peoples who honored the Mother Earth, who wanted women of thinking to live among them?*

*I grew to womanhood in that search-saw all my companions die-bore a little daughter of my own, and saw her die also. I found a few friends and protectors, and many more enemies.*

*For a long time, I was alone, and grew to believe that isolation was natural to me.*

*Yet, forty winters later, there in the Fire Hole, alone amid the beauty of the big geyser smokes, and the singing and seething of Her healing waters beneath the Earth, and the pines' moist with the drifting steam, suddenly I saw the face of a new enemy lurking. By now, I had begun to learn that the greatest 'enemies are within the human being-enemies like ignorance, laziness, baseness, indulgence, panic, isolation from other humans.*

*I saw myself about to believe that a lifetime of war was behind me-that I was now safely into my grandmother time. That I could sit quietly with my Pipe, and let the gentle smoke weave a circle of peaceful beauty, and a quiet death.*

*But is Healing peaceful?*

*Or is the wild rose a battlefield where the hummingbird must fight to find nectar? Where sweet taste is the rot of Death transformed?*

*And so I had to confront myself, there in my quiet lodge, shouting at myself in the quiet:*

*EEEEEEARRRRRTH THUUUUUUNDER! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT YOUR WORLD IS AT WAAAAARRRR? THAT MILLIONS OF OTHER HUMANS LIVE ON THE EARTH WITH YOU?*



*How tiny is my world? How much greater can it be? What other humans can I find to share my dream?*

*That slave-girl sitting there? Could she be one of them? I need a girl, my first Girl, to help me.*

*How sweetly she looks at me. She has big Feeling, that girl. She is intelligent too-and very frightened.*

*What an enormous responsibility -to take such a girl with me. She is so young, so ignorant.*

*If I were to die while we journey toward my dream, she would be left alone on the prairie, to die horribly of her ignorance. I would be responsible for this. Yet-if I leave her here, she will be eaten alive by these people. I would be responsible for this also.*

*What will I choose?*

The Spring Moon trading day passed. The shadow of the Trading Tree moved from west to east.

As the pile of trade goods grew smaller, the dun horse departed with a wealthy family, while the Cheyenne shield went off on the back of a young warrior.

Desperate with a child's need to run and play, Tadpole stood up and leaned against the Trading Tree with an exasperated sigh. Then, exhausted, she slumped over to sleep for a while. When she awoke, the old woman had vanished from her place. The spotted travois horse was gone also.

Terror smashed down onto the girl's mind like a buffalo's hoof crushing a lark's egg in the grass. Had Earth Thunder left?

Then she overheard Calf quietly ask Walking Wolf in Ute:

"Do you know what Earth Thunder wants?"

"Horns! No!" exclaimed Walking Wolf with exasperation. "She has distracted the people terribly! It has cost me many horses!"

Shortly, with an enormous relief that flowed through her entire body, the girl saw the old woman walking back with a swift light stride. Earth Thunder resumed her seat, her blanket folded sleekly around her like a wondrous plumage.

just then, a tall angry-looking Shoshoni woman came marching up to the Trading Tree, gripping nine buffalo spears in her arms. She was wearing a fine quilled belt. The spears were the kind that a strong hunter could drive into the flanks of buffalo. There the weapon would dangle, tearing at the buffalo's insides, bleeding and weakening the animal. The woman looked like her lances-mean and lethal.

The woman threw the lances down with a clatter at Walking Wolf's feet. In a tight, angry voice, she said:

"These for the Bitch Dog by the tree."

Tadpole, realizing that her fate was finally being decided, turned away on her haunches with a swift, desperate movement.

Walking Wolf bent over and examined the spears.

"Slim. Not too bad. A little too slim," he muttered. "Could be thicker. Yes, much thicker. The heads well chipped. Yes." He stood up again. "Surely you have more to offer."

"You don't want that girl," the woman spat at him furiously. "It'll be four years, maybe five, before I want her myself. My hands will be full training her."

"Surely something more," stated Walking Wolf calmly. "Perhaps the belt."

With a brusque movement, the woman untied her belt and threw it down onto the lances. Tadpole had fallen onto her side, and was weeping piteously.

Walking Wolf was about to say "Done!" when Earth Thunder spoke quietly in fluent Ute behind him:

"Walking Wolf!

Instantly the hair on the back of the girl's neck felt like it had sprung straight out, from amazement. At the Trading Tree, no one ever called a trader by his name. It was a rule as sacred as that of not recognizing any chief. Slowly she sat up, blinking through her tears, and stared.

Walking Wolf looked shocked, but the old Medicine woman had a sparkling amused expression in her eyes.

"I believe," she smiled, "that you are more interested in this for the girl." Her voice was high, but clear and strong, and wondrously musical.

Reaching under her skirt, the old woman pulled out a beautiful new brass ax with an ash handle. The head was polished in a way that even Calf couldn't have done, and it sparkled in the evening sun. The girl sat there openmouthed. The brass ax was worth four or five horses. Was she, a skinny girl, worth that much to the old woman? Why?

At sight of the ax, Walking Wolf recovered from his shock.

"Aha! " he boomed, his eyes narrowing slyly. " It is very pretty, Medicine woman. But being the old wolf that I am, I know that anyone who pulls a sparkie from under her skirt surely must have another one there also."

Earth Thunder kept smiling.

"Yes," she said evenly. "I know that you cannot pass up- this shining jewel that is worth a hundred buffalo spears." She reached under her skirt, and pulled out a second brass ax. "Two," she added. "And if you argue with me, Walking Wolf, I will put both of them back under my skirt. And I will pull out something that will be a simple, even trade."

"Done! Done!" the old métis exclaimed, stepping forward, nearly knocking aside the angry woman.

"Not so fast, Walking Wolf," countered the Medicine woman, the music in her voice changing to cold metal. She stood up.

Rubbing her teary eyes with the sleeve of the trading dress, the girl could feel the consternation in everyone around her. Oh, no!

Oh, no! Earth Thunder is standing up again. What now?

"There are twenty bags of salt that are mine," Earth Thunder went on in a knife-blade voice.

To hide his loss of command over the situation, Walking Wolf turned away and threw a stick of wood on his fire.

Twenty bags of salt! How would the old trader counter this bold demand? Twenty bags would have to be worth an enormous concession on Earth Thunder's part. But what?

"And ten hair ribbons are also mine," she stated, walking toward him.

He spun on his moccasin heel and stared at her. From behind her back, she brought out a third brass ax. This one threw off a brilliant flash that lit the whole Trading Circle.

The angry woman gathered up her things and left.

"Three glitteries," rallied Walking Wolf, trying to recover his balance, smiling. "For the girl, the twenty bags of salt, and ten ribbons. It is done."

Tadpole sat silent in an exhausted little heap. She was still breathing shudderingly, deeply. She did not even have the strength to get up. Now she was the slave of this famed witch. What would this mean? What surprises, what terrors lay ahead?

With soft firm treads of her moccasins, Earth Thunder came to the girl, and gently put her own Medicine blanket around her. The girl wiped her streaming nose on the sleeve of the trading dress. Then, slowly, dazedly, clutching the beautiful blanket around her, she got to her feet.

Suddenly Calf came rushing up.

"The pretties I put on her!" the fat woman panted. "They do not go with the trade!"

Calf grabbed one of the girl's braids, to jerk out the stained old ribbons. Tadpole cowered, and yiped with pain.

Earth Thunder stepped in, and Calf loosed the girl's braid.

"I will have the girl leave your things by the tree," assured Earth Thunder. Her voice was musical again, but softer, gentler than before.

Calf's crazed eyes were fixed on the trading dress. "How can I trust you?"

Earth Thunder took Calf's trembling hand in hers. "You have my word. Be kind. For kindness will bring you what you search for."

Calf snatched her plump hands away and ran heavily to her lodge.

Snuggling, herself deeply into the warm folds of the beautiful blanket, the girl felt comforted by the good scent of sweetgrass and fine tobacco in the robe. How clean it felt, somehow-like a warm summer breeze!

Now Walking Wolf strode determinedly toward Earth Thunder.

Clearly it had come to his mind-the great concession that he must ask.

"Magic woman," he declared in a firm voice, "you have plagued me for years. I will always trade fair with you. But next time I would ask you to stand off afar until the trading is done. Or let me know beforehand what it is that you wish to trade. "

Earth Thunder smiled slyly. "What will you give me," she asked, if I agree to do this? "

"It will be thirty bags of salt," he said.

"Done," she said softly. She touched his scarred hand.

Walking Wolf's stern mask of trade cracked, and he smiled a broad and dazzling smile.

."It's good salt," he said in a husky voice. "With thirty bags, you couldn't spit one mouthful of sand."

<sup>1</sup>The Snake River. The Feathered Snake-the Quetzalcoatl-was one of the symbols of the pyramid-builders of the South.

---

[Back to Wildcat Press](#)

E-mail Wildcat at [wildcatpress@aol.com](mailto:wildcatpress@aol.com)  
8306 Wilshire Blvd. Box 8306  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
(323) 966-2466 (323) 966-2467 [fax]

**PRESS | ENTERTAINMENT | ENTERPRISES**  
**PARTNERS | CONTACT US**

© Copyright 2001-2003 Wildcat International